

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

Robert J. Christman
Deputy Superintendent



600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
Phone (701) 328-2260
Fax (701) 328-2461
www.nd.gov/dpi

For Immediate Release

Oct. 13, 2015

Contact: Dale Wetzel, Public Information Specialist

Office 701-328-2247

Cell: 701-400-8557

Email: dewetzel@nd.gov

Baesler Effort Will Cut Costs, Reduce Bureaucracy

BISMARCK, N.D., Oct. 13, 2015 – North Dakota School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said a special committee will explore whether some education data reporting requirements can be streamlined or eliminated, which would save school districts time and money.

Baesler is chairwoman of the 14-member School District Reporting Review Committee, which held its first meeting last week. The panel includes school superintendents, legislators and Department of Public Instruction managers.

The DPI will be working with the committee's six school superintendents to compile a comprehensive list of mandated reports, Baesler said. The list will include information about the state or federal law or regulation that requires the report to be produced; the deadline for filing it; for whom it is produced; and who has access to it.

The committee could decide some reports are no longer needed. If the group decides a report is necessary, members and other stakeholders who regularly handle the report will go over its contents in more detail, and discuss whether it could be combined with similar reports, Baesler said.

"It is important that we examine what we are collecting and why we are requiring it to be reported," Baesler said. "During my 24 years as an educator, in every role I had, I was frustrated about the amount of time I spent filling out paperwork and submitting reports. That took away from time I wanted to spend with my students.

"When I became state superintendent, I knew it was important that we take a look at ways we can eliminate government bureaucracy, and return important resources of time and money to our students," Baesler said.

The 2015 Legislature created the committee to review "statutory and regulatory reporting requirements imposed upon school districts, with a view toward eliminating reporting requirements that are duplicative or unnecessary and streamlining the reporting process." (SB2031, Section 28)

(Continued)

One of the committee members is state Sen. Tim Flakoll, R-Fargo, the chairman of the North Dakota Senate's Education Committee.

"We felt that we were taking too many resources away from the classroom, and in many cases, having reports that weren't meaningful. They were sometimes redundant. They were outdated," Flakoll said. "We really want to make sure that whatever is being reported has a useful purpose.

"We also want to use this as an opportunity to ensure that the information that we're collecting is very secure, that it is only accessible to the appropriate audience," Flakoll said.

The committee's members are:

Chairwoman: Kirsten Baesler, state superintendent of public instruction.

Legislators: Sen. Tim Flakoll, R-Fargo, chairman of the North Dakota Senate Education Committee; Rep. Mike Nathe, R-Bismarck, chairman of the North Dakota House Education Committee; Rep. Jerry Kelsh, D-Fullerton, a member of the House Education Committee.

School superintendents: Mike Bitz, Mandan; Jeff Fastnacht, Ellendale; Sherlock Hirning, Divide County; Mike McNeff, Rugby; Ben Schafer, Ray; Mark Vollmer, Minot.

DPI supervisors: Jerry Coleman, manager, school finance and organization; Laurie Matzke, manager, student support and innovation; Steve Snow, director, management information systems; and Gerry Teevens, director, special education.

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